

The Pipeline

Quarterly update on Brier Hill Neighborhood—U.S. Route 422 Corridor Action Plan • December 2011

Three Years of Action

In April 2009, a small group of Brier Hill stakeholders first met in the basement of Antioch Baptist Church to talk about the neighborhood's problems, possibilities and priorities for the future.

Those discussions evolved into an Action Plan. Nearly three years later, much has changed for the better in the Brier Hill-U.S. Route 422 Corridor.

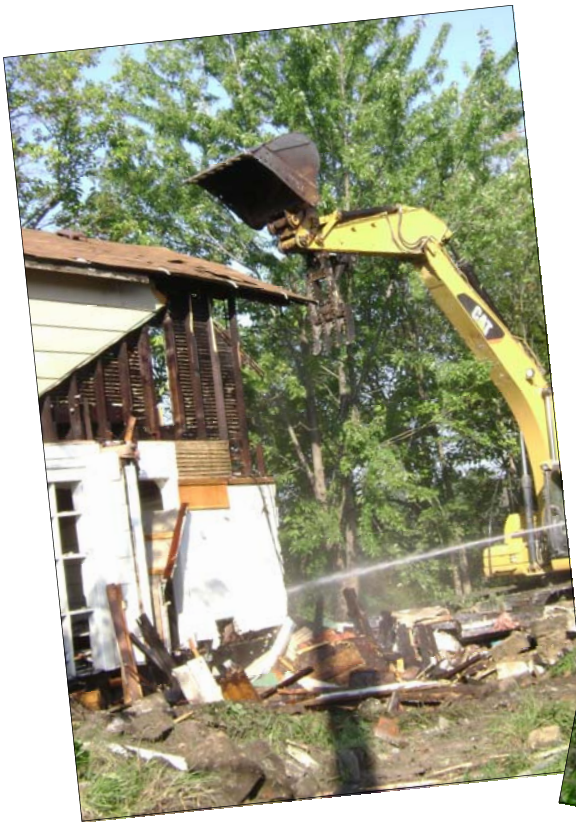
Here's a review of the Action Plan and the progress made. Thank you to all those who made that change happen.

Blight

First and foremost, Brier Hill stakeholders said the top priority in the Action Plan must be eliminating blight in the neighborhood and along the Route 422 corridor.

So, in early 2010 V&M Star provided the first donation in what would become a **\$60,000** investment into demolishing abandoned houses and creating new green space. Since then, Lien Forward Ohio arranged for the demolition of **14 dilapidated houses** and garages and the City of Youngstown added some of its resources to demolish **an additional 11 houses**.

The city also handled the necessary paperwork for all demolitions, arranged for asbestos testing and abatement and covered some or all of the asbestos abatement costs for the **25 structures razed** in Brier Hill. The total value of the city's contribution is estimated at **\$96,000**.



The dilapidated fencing that lined U.S. Route 422 through the Brier Hill neighborhood is gone now with prompting from Lien Forward Ohio and quick work by the city street department, giving one of the city's main gateways a much cleaner look.



Top: Oakland Ave. before fence removal.
Bottom: Oakland Ave. after fence removal.

Rt. 422 Fence



Green Space

Stakeholders made clear that removing blight wasn't enough; that properties in Brier Hill deserved a new, greener look. In direct partnership with Treez Please, greening the neighborhood has taken many forms through the Action Plan.

Housing demolitions led to newly planted trees, urban meadows and clover fields. Two high-profile spots were given large-scale landscaping makeovers.

Almost **10,000 cars** travel the Route 422 corridor daily. The high-profile vacant acre on Oakland Avenue at the Superior Street traffic light was the perfect spot for a large-scale greening project.

Using the vision developed by Treez Please, Lien Forward acquired ownership of the land and organized volunteers from spring through fall to transform the space. The series of six vacant, weeded lots with dead trees has become a peaceful oasis featuring **two landscaped islands** with **seven new trees** and **100 blooming flower bulbs**, plus **two large wildflower meadows** that will live on, almost maintenance free, for years to come.

Oakland Ave.



Sustainable green space is important in a city with ever-shrinking resources. Treez Please suggested experimenting with “urban meadows — planned spaces for wildflowers and trees that bring all the benefits of nature into small-scale city setting. The meadows re-seed themselves and bring a different look with each different bloom throughout the year.

Three urban meadows were planted on lots left vacant by housing demolitions. **Two** other large meadows also were established on the Oakland Avenue site.



Urban Meadows



Temple & Beck

The corner hillside at Temple & Beck is highly visible from Route 422 across from V&M Star. The metal retaining wall had failed, the hillside was filled with weeds and brush and the sandstone wall was covered in vines.

Lien Forward took ownership of the land, and at the suggestion of Treez Please, a contractor was brought in. The wild foliage was cleared away, the hillside re-graded and grass planted to add natural color and secure the soil. Meanwhile, volunteers cleaned up the stone wall to reveal its natural beauty.

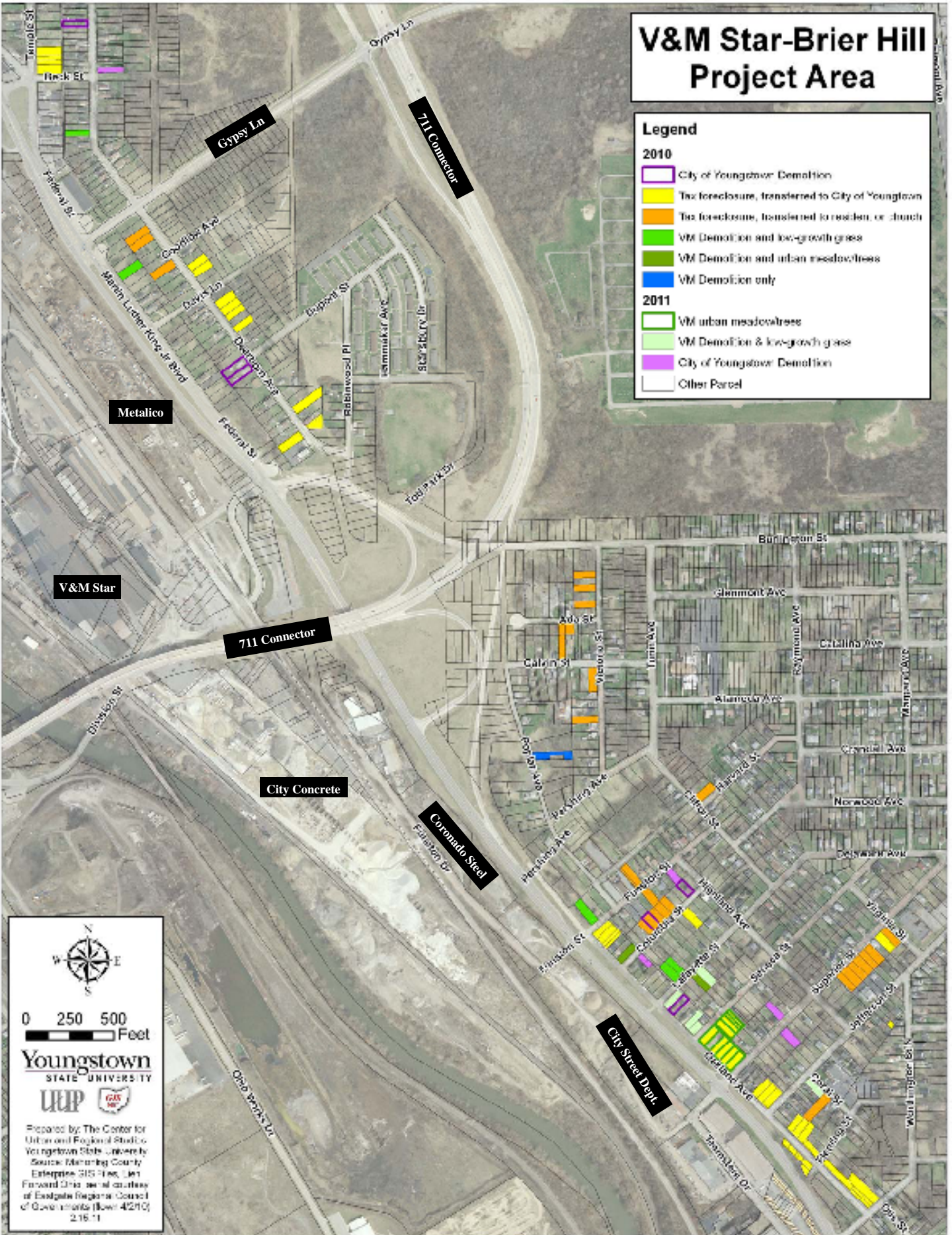
Part of improving the Brier Hill neighborhood involves turning over abandoned land to neighbors who are maintaining the properties and paying the taxes.

More than **100 parcels** totaling **10.2 acres** of land have new owners within the past two years. Neighbors now own **60** of those parcels with Lien Forward Ohio's help. LFO also secured ownership of **30 parcels** that the City of Youngstown Land Bank will own. The Mahoning County Treasurer's office also assisted the Land Bank with gaining ownership to **12 additional properties**.

Land

Mapping

The colored areas of this map shows all the parcels touched by the Action Plan since its development in 2009 and implementation in 2010. The project area was defined generally as the city line, Worthington Street, Dearborn & Highland avenues and U.S. Route 422.



Blight

Blight removal hardly ends at demolishing houses. It's the smaller efforts like planting grass, rallying volunteers to pick up trash and maintaining green spaces that bring a neighborhood together and makes a true difference in quality of life in the city.



Volunteers are the lifeblood of any such community effort. Numerous volunteers from neighborhood churches, civic organizations, businesses and students joined residents and other individuals to contribute hundreds of work hours toward beautifying the Route 422 corridor and Brier Hill neighborhood. There's never enough thanks for all the helping hands that accomplished so much.

Volunteers



Trash Cleanups

Clover Fields



Leaving muddy, weeded lots behind after a house demolition doesn't fully address the blight issue.

So, Lien Forward had volunteers or contractors seed a low-growth grass/clover mix on **11 demolition lots**. The seed stabilizes the soil, beautifies the space with red and white blooms yet requires no maintenance since the grass/clover grows only about six inches at its highest.

About Lien Forward Ohio

Lien Forward Ohio Regional Council of Governments was created in October 2005 by the City of Youngstown and Mahoning County. Its mission is to return vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent property to productive use.

Board of Directors

President and Chairman – Daniel Yemma, Mahoning County Treasurer

Vice Chairman – John McNally IV, Mahoning County Commissioner

Secretary – Vacant

Treasurer – John R. Swierz, Youngstown City Councilman

Member per bylaws – Charles Sammarone, Youngstown Mayor

Where to Find the Action Plan

Want to read the eight-page Brier Hill Neighborhood—U.S. Route 422 Corridor Action Plan? Here is where you can find the document:

- Go to the Lien Forward Ohio homepage at www.lienforwardohio.org
- Call our office at (330) 259-1040 and request a hard copy through the U.S. mail.

Contact Us

Office: 20 W. Federal Place, Suite M5-A, Youngstown, OH 44503

Phone: (330) 259-1040

Fax: (330) 259-1044

Web: www.lienforwardohio.org

Email: rgsmith@lienforwardohio.org